

Editorial: Too many signatures weeded out for SeaTac ballot measure

The courts should order the SeaTac minimum-wage measure on to the November ballot.

Seattle Times Editorial

THE question in more than one court Friday is whether the \$15 minimum-wage proposition in SeaTac should appear on the November ballot. That answer is yes. And it must be decided Friday because it is the final day for changing the ballot.

This is not an endorsement of the measure itself, which would effectively raise the minimum wage for certain airport and hospitality workers by two-thirds. Whether to vote yes or no is a separate and important question. But it is clear that enough SeaTac citizens signed the petition to put it on the ballot.

SeaTac is a small city. Under state law, the advocates, a group of union activists, needed to turn in only 1,536 valid signatures. The county validated 1,780 signatures, but 145 were thrown out by the city for not being dated, though they might be sandwiched between other signatures that were.

Fourteen signers did not write their addresses though they did live in SeaTac, and the city threw their signatures out. And 61 citizens signed twice. Judge Andrea Darvas of King County Superior Court threw those signatures out — including the original signatures, following a state law. The petitioners ended up 17 signatures short, and last week Darvas removed the measure from the ballot.

The weeding-out was excessive. Some of the faults are arguably reasons to throw out signatures, but if a voter signs a second time, it should not invalidate the original signature. That has been the rule in statewide initiative campaigns for many years, and it makes sense. People should be counted — once. And if that rule is followed, this measure makes the ballot.

Earlier this year the double-signature problem came up in a case in Cowlitz County, and the judge ruled that throwing both signatures out was unconstitutional. That decision was not appealed and still stands.

Two lawsuits are in courts Friday, one in King County Superior Court and one in the state Court of Appeals. The Cowlitz County ruling is the one they should follow.